

Jacqueline B. Kennedy and the Power of Poetry

Overview

Topic: Biography and Writing

Grade Level: 1 - 8

Subject Area: Social Studies, ELA

Time Required: 1 class period

Goals

- Introduce students to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy's interest in and talent with words
- Motivate students to write a poem by sharing a mentor text by an historical figure

Essential Questions

How can you use sensory imagery to write a poem?

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- analyze and interpret a poem
- write a poem using sensory imagery

Curriculum Connections

NCTE/ IRA Standards for the English Language Arts

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).



(Transcript)

Sea Joy by Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy
(written in 1939 at age 10)

When I go down by the sandy shore
I can think of nothing I want more
Than to live by the booming blue sea
As the seagulls flutter round about me

I can run about--when the tide is out
With the wind and the sand and the sea all about
And the seagulls are swirling and diving for fish
Oh - to live by the sea is my only wish.

Preparation

Prior Knowledge and Skills

It is helpful for students to have familiarity with John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline B. Kennedy. You can use the [Picture Book Biographies](#) or [biographical essays](#) to provide this context.

Historical Background and Context

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy had a talent with words. When she was a young girl she read whenever she could; she even sneaked out of bed during nap time to read adult books. As a college senior, she won the Vogue Prix de Paris essay contest and in her application, admitted that “she would drop everything any time to read a book on ballet.” John F. Kennedy loved to read and write, too, though his wife was better at memorizing poems. He depended on her to remind him of verses of his favorite poems like *Ulysses* by Alfred Lord Tennyson which she had learned as a child.

Jacqueline Kennedy wrote poetry, too. When she was 10 years old, she composed and illustrated a poem called *Sea Joy*. In this activity, students analyze the sensory imagery in the poem and then write a poem about their favorite place.

Materials

- [Picture Book Biography of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy](#) or [Life of Jacqueline B. Kennedy](#)
- Copies of *Sea Joy* by Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

Procedure

1. Provide the background information so that students can read it independently or read it aloud to them.
2. Read *Sea Joy* to students or have them read it individually.
3. Take turns having students read the poem out loud, guiding them to use their voice to express the rhythm and rhymes.
4. Discuss the poem. *What do you notice about the poem? What do you like about it? What pictures do you have in your mind when you read the poem? How does it make you feel? Why do you think Jacqueline B. Kennedy chose the title Sea Joy?*

5. Explain that sensory imagery, describing details using the five senses, brings a poem alive. Have them analyze the poem by identifying sensory imagery in the poem. Have students do the following:

- Draw an ear above words that remind them of a sound.
- Draw an eye above the words that make them see colors and shapes.
- Draw a hand above words that remind them of a texture or something they can touch.
- Draw a nose above words that make them think of a smell.
- Draw a mouth above words that make them think of a taste.

Explain that just as Jacqueline B. Kennedy wrote about her favorite place, they will write about a place that brings them joy. They will use sensory imagery to write the poem Explain that sensory imagery helps the reader experience the place that is described in the poem. Guide students through this visualization and writing exercise:

1. Think of a place that brings you joy.
2. Take a few minutes to imagine the place. Use the questions below to allow your mind to created a detailed picture of your place.
 - What do you see?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - What might you taste?
 - What are the textures of the things around you?
3. Use these images to write your poem. Use your sensory imagery to describe the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures of your favorite place.

Assessment

Review students' poems for sensory imagery and how well they conveyed a sense of their favorite place.

Accommodations

- Analyze the poem as a whole class.
- Write a poem as a whole class or in small groups.

Extensions

- Challenge students to write their poem in couplets, the form that Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy used in *Sea Joy*. A couplet consists of two lines of poetry that rhyme, for example:

When I go down by the sandy *shore*
I can think of nothing I want *more*

- Have students read the [Jacqueline Kennedy Picture Book Biography](#), or the [Life of Jacqueline B. Kennedy](#) to find evidence of her love of reading and writing.
- Have students memorize *Sea Joy* or their original poem.
- Have students illustrate their poem.
- Have students share a favorite poem if they have one, reciting it and telling why it's a favorite.

Further reading

Kennedy, Caroline. *The Best-Loved Poems by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*. Hyperion, 2005.

Kennedy, Caroline. *Poems to Learn by Heart*. Disney-Hyperion, 2013.